

PROGRAMME

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INTRODUCTION

The first thing you need to know is that everything at Autscape is completely optional. You are not obliged to attend anything, speak to anyone (unless you are a parent or carer), or participate in any way. If you are interested in doing things, there is plenty going on throughout the day – serious, fun, structured and unstructured.

First, there is an overview of some of the activities happening at Autscape. Following that is a full schedule of the events we have planned. Other activities will be proposed by participants during the conference, so please check with the up to date timetable in the information centre or online.

ACTIVITIES

Singing rounds

When we can find the space and time, and weather permitting, small groups gather to sing rounds, often outdoors. Feel free to join in. Everyone is welcome.

When: During breaks, after meals and at other times.

Where: Outside the dining room, on the grass next to the classroom block, in the theatre, or other convenient place.

Home groups

Are you looking for some help with meeting new people? Home groups have been created to help people, especially those who are new, feel comfortable at Autscape and get the best out of the experience by providing a small group that they can get to know a bit better and identify with.

You may have indicated that you would like to join a home group when you booked, but even if you didn't, you can ask to be added to one when you register. Each home group has its own colour which you will be assigned upon joining it.

When: 5.30pm Each day

Where: Various rooms in the classroom block

Crèche

There is childcare available for any children and young people under 18. Parents may give permission for their 13-17 year olds to be outside of childcare on their own.

When: Wednesday and Thursday 9:30 to 13:00; 16:00 to 18:00, Friday 9:30 to 13:00. (Note: From 14:00 to 16:00 there will be leisure activities, some of which will be suitable for children and young people to attend, with their carers if appropriate. Childcare staff will be on hand to help children access leisure activities. There will be up to 15 minutes before and after each session to drop off and collect your children.)

Where: Childcare takes place in the Pavilion, beyond the dining hall.

SPACES

Places to pass the time:

- Sensory room
- Quiet room
- Drop-in
- Social space (Style common room or one in your own house)

SCHEDULE

Tuesday, 16 August

14:30-16:30 **Registration**

Registration takes place in the houses (Nowell, Style and Shute). You should have received an email telling you your house and its PIN. If not, please contact Debbie at registrar@autscape.org as soon as possible. Note: house PINs are not to be shared with others.

14:30-16:30 **Socialising and badge decorating** (Style common room and drop-in)

Come and meet some organisers and other participants while personalising your name badge using stickers and colouring pens.

15:30-16:00 Refreshments (Dining Room)

16:45-17:15 **Orientation** (Theatre)

Orientation will explain a few things about how things work at Autscape. There may be new information, so please come along even if you have attended Autscape before. Attendance is *strongly recommended* for all participants.

17:30-18:00 First meeting of **Home groups** (Classroom Block)

18:00-19:00 Evening meal (Dining Room)

21:00-23:00 **Evening activities**

There are a number of planned and unplanned activities in the evenings. Some of these are listed below in the schedule. Others will be announced at the Information Centre, so please check there for up to date activity listings.

19:00-23:00 **Socialising in the lounge** (Style common room)

There will be a lounge area in the Style common room (which is at the front of the building, away from the bedrooms) where informal socialising takes place. We will not be selling alcohol, but you may bring your own to consume there.

19:00-20:00 Discussion: **Menopause** - *Kabie and Ava-Ruth*

19:00-21:00 **Swimming** (School Pool; near the entrance to Shute house)

19:30-20:30 **Quiz night** - *Elaine (Style common room)*

21:00-22:00 **Sparklies in the Dark** (Sports Hall; next to the Dining Room towards Style)

This is one of Autscape's traditions! Time to share enjoyment with light up toys and glow sticks. Autscape will provide one glow stick per person. More sparklies can be purchased at the time.

Wednesday, 17 August

08:30-09:30 Breakfast

All day **Autism research workshops** - *Peter Baimbridge & Daniel Poole* (Discussion rm 2)

Have input into the direction of autism research by contributing to this project from autism@Manchester.

09:30-10:45 **Lecture** (Theatre):

Training you, from a dog's point of view - *Marie Yates*

Dogs have a lot in common with those of us with Autism. They have exceptional sensory capabilities, they only tell their truth and they work best when teaching is presented in a clear, logical manner. This session will offer a unique take on coping with the nuances that come with being Autistic; taking lessons from a canine friend. Functioning in a neurotypical world requires a huge amount of adaptation and resilience. We will take a journey, through the story of a rescue dog, identifying some

key skills that we can use to enhance our lives and utilise the way in which our brain works. This inspirational, entertaining and thought provoking session will train you, from a dog's point of view.

10:45-11:30 Break (Tea and coffee will be served in the Dining Room)

11:30-13:00 **Lectures** (Theatre):

Autistics doing it for themselves: participation in academic research - *Peter Baimbridge and Dr Daniel Poole*

There is increasing recognition of a serious divide between the research and autism communities. Specifically, autistic adults and family members do not feel engaged in research and voice concerns that researchers are not working on issues that are important to them (Pellicano et al, 2014).

In an attempt to bridge this divide a series of workshops were developed by autism@manchester in collaboration with SalfordAutism. These workshops were designed to improve communication between the autistic and research communities, aiming to increase the involvement of the autism community in the lifecycle of research.

In this presentation two of the organisers- Peter Baimbridge and Dr Daniel Poole will discuss data collected at the workshops, and reflect on how the workshops were developed and implemented

The Professional Auty - *John Wilson*

Some professionals think they know all about autism. And some actually have autism. Is there a difference?

Professions have rules. And the legal profession is even all about rules. They teach you them during training. Or so they say. But they're just the written down rules.

What about all the unwritten rules and customs and practices that professions have, especially the law? Can an auty survive and even thrive in such an environment without being 'one of the chaps'? How does this exclusion affect a professional auty?

My thesis is that whilst autism tends to be viewed as a minus, especially by NTs, sometimes nothing could be further from the truth. But then the danger is it may be perceived as a threat to the status quo. So I will speak about my experience and provide some reflections.

11:30-13:00 **Art workshop** - *Trish Jubb* (Drama room, 1st floor classroom block)

13:00-14:00 Lunch (Dining Room)

14:00-15:30 **Leisure activities**

A lot goes on during leisure time, some of it decided during Autscape itself. Go to the Information Centre to see what's on. You could organise an activity of your own, such as a board game or a discussion. You could also use this time to socialise, do something on your own or rest. Check the information centre for up to date activity listings.

14:00-15:30 **Table tennis** - *Damian* (Dutton Centre)

14:00-16:00 **Guided walk** - *Anna* (Meet outside classroom block)

14:00-16:00 **Swimming** (School Pool)

14:30-15:30 Informal Workshop: **Where does autism fit? Aspects of identity** - *Kalen*

14:30-15:30 Discussion: **Autistic experience of non-violent communication** - *River*

15:30-16:00 Break

16:00-17:15 **Workshop** (Theatre):

Claiming an identity they taught us to despise - *Caroline Hearst*

Autism is highly stigmatised, many autistic people refuse to acknowledge their autism to others and sometimes even to themselves. However, for me personally, and many autistic people I know claiming and exploring our identities as autistic people has been life enhancing, and even some would say, liberating.

This workshop will examine what it means to discover that part of your identity which was always there has, or perhaps suddenly acquires, a stigmatised term attached to it. The context of autism in society at large and how that has affected those of us who choose to name autism as part of our

identity will be explored. We will look at how we can go on to develop a positive pro-active identity as a community despite autisms contested status in the larger community.

This lecture will give a broad overview, complete with images, demonstrations and anecdotes, of the history of autistic space as it emerged online and branched out into a "real world" social movement from there.

17:30-18:00 Meeting of **Home groups** (classroom block)

18:00-19:00 Evening meal

19:00-23:00 **Evening Activities**

Check the information centre for up to date activity listings.

19:00-20:00 **Lightning Talks** (Theatre)

A series of 5 minute talks on a variety of topics from a number of presenters.

19:00-23:00 **Socialising in the lounge** (Style common room)

20:00-21:00 **Organ Recital** - *Philip* (Chapel)

20:00-22:00 **Disco** (Dutton Centre)

20:00-23:00 **Board games** - *Stephen* (Drop-in)

Thursday, 18 August

08:30-09:30 Breakfast

09:30-10:45 **Verbal Workshop** (Theatre)

Can a mindfulness practice help relieve everyday stress in a neurodiverse population? - *Kay Locke*

Mindfulness is very fashionable in the media and within psychological and mental health services. A mindfulness practice may help to reduce symptoms of stress in everyday life, and be a valuable addition to pharmacological treatment. We know people within the neuro diverse population have a higher vulnerability to stress, anxiety and depression simply by taking part in everyday life. How can we access mindfulness in a useful and meaningful way? In mindfulness based cognitive therapy we are encouraged to notice physical sensation, thoughts and emotions as they naturally arise.

Alexithymia or difficulty identifying emotions and those of others is often part of our identity. Do we have a richer physical reaction to everyday life? Is this key to our identity and communication style? If so can we build this into a mindfulness practice?

10:45-11:30 Break

11:30-12:30 **Lectures** (theatre)

Autistic identity and the limits of inclusion (Martijn Dekker)

This lecture attempts to evaluate how the concepts of autistic culture and identity developed since the 1990s and to extrapolate where we should go in the future.

Autism is not excluded from the "culture wars" now going on in Western societies at large, in which identity is central. As identities become ever more politicised, people are increasingly invested in them, leading both to more tight-knit communities and more polarisation between them. This lecture will explore the concept of inclusion in the context of ever-increasing polarisation, and what the implications are for the autistic community in general and for Autescape in particular.

Trends are parallel but different in the US, the UK, Europe and in the rest of the world. The autistic community remains fragmented, with different factions in various countries sometimes unaware of each others' existence. Options for bridging the gaps between the various islands will be discussed.

Expectations of what 'Autistic' means and how this impacts upon self identity (Kabie Brook)

Often people's expectations of who we are and how we identify, are at odds with how we feel ourselves.

Maintaining a strong and healthy sense of self identity can be challenging when those around us do not respect the way we choose to identify or expect us to be able to fit only the stereotypes they themselves have created in relation to who they think autistic people are.

As a representative the stakes can be higher, our identity is often under even more scrutiny and this can have a direct impact upon our effectiveness at ensuring the views of those who wish to be represented are heard and taken seriously.

In my lecture I will explore these ideas and suggest solutions to some of the commonest pitfalls, as well as steps we can take to protect ourselves when surrounded by those who refuse to accept us.

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 **Workshop (Theatre):**

Exploring Autistic Identity through performance - *Olivia Astrid Pountney*

With the demands that are often expected from us in a Neurotypically led society, we often suppress a lot of our autistic behaviours, in order to meet a lot of expectations. This can sometimes come at an expense to our own well-being and self-esteem. With this workshop, we are aiming to get back in touch with our true selves through drama, and for a short period of time, to remove "our masks".

Through warm up exercises, playing team based games and improvisation activities, I aim to take you all on journey of self discovery in a relaxed, fun, non judgemental space. I believe expression within the arts can be a great way of liberating ourselves from the stresses of our world and aid us in feeling more comfortable within our autistic selves.

14:00-15:30 **Leisure activities**

Check the information centre for up to date activity listings.

14:00-16:00 **Walk to Settle Pool** (meet outside dining room)

14:00-16:00 **Guided walk - *Anna*** (meet outside classroom block)

14:30-15:30 Discussion: **Experiences of inertia (initiative difficulties) - *Kalen***
(Discussion room 3)

15:30-16:00 Break

16:00-17:15 **Workshop (Theatre)**

Identifying with autism in film and television - *Hannah Ebben*

My talk presents various ways in which characters in film and television have been identified as autistic. Ever since the 1960's, there have been several visual representations of Autistic people in popular culture that have contributed to the public profile of 'autism', but not always in a way that has enriched the lives of Autistic people themselves. Almost all Autistic characters are played by neurotypical actors, and some famous films brought unfortunate stereotypes to a wider public. In a lecture, I will discuss how film characters have been identified as Autistic in a few historical examples. I will also address the disadvantages of research on cultural representations of autism that focuses on the question whether Autistic characters are true to 'reality' or not. After the lecture, I will lead a discussion based on the questions which representations are harmful and how film and television could empower Autistic people instead.

17:30-18:00 **Home groups** (Classroom Block)

18:00-19:00 Evening meal

19:00-23:00 **Evening Activities**

Check the information centre for up to date activity listings.

19:00-23:00 **Socialising in the lounge** (Style common room)

20:00-21:30 **Entertainment evening** (Theatre)

The entertainment evening has become a regular feature at Autescape. We have various acts, musical and otherwise. If you are interested in performing this year, please sign up on the list at the Information Centre. In an attempt to ensure the evening does not last too long, we ask that people limit performances to 5 minutes.

Friday, 19 August

08:30-09:30 Breakfast

09:30-10:00 **Pre-AGM discussion** (Theatre)

Make suggestions and ask questions to the board and the organisers before the AGM begins.

10:00-10:45 **Annual General Meeting** (Theatre)

10:45-11:30 Break

11:30-12:15 **Lecture** (Theatre)

Whose identity? - *Dr Larry Arnold*

Is identity something we adopt for ourselves, or is it conferred externally. Do we have multiple identities in different settings and is our autistic identity only one of these?

Is an identity defined by a psychiatric condition ever anything other than stigmatising, or is it a response to stigma? Do we internalise oppression within our identity or make a bold stand against it?

I discovered the world of autistic identity more than a decade ago and the world of autistic culture within which I expressed it has moved in the intervening years, so I ask this series of questions based around the question of whether that original identity is still valid and if so where it is valid.

My long experience of the autistic community has enabled me to observe changes in the way that it has been expressed over the years.

12:15-13:00 **Panel Discussion on the topic of Identity** - *Panelists to be announced*

13:00-14:00 Lunch

PRESENTERS' BIOS

Marie Yates

Presenting: ***Training You, From A Dog's Point Of View*** (Wed. 09:30)

Marie Yates is a published author, speaker and Director of Canine Perspective CIC, a social enterprise. Marie also has Asperger's.

Peter Baimbridge and Dr. Daniel Poole

Presenting: ***Autistics doing it for themselves: participation in academic research*** (Wed. 11:30)

Peter Baimbridge and Dr Daniel Poole are steering committee members of Autism@Manchester, the cross-faculty Autism Research Group at The University of Manchester. Daniel is a postdoctoral teaching assistant in the School of Psychological Sciences at the university and is neurotypical. Peter is autistic and CEO of Salfordautism, an advocacy and support organisation run by autistic professionals.

John Wilson

Presenting: ***The Professional Auty*** (Wed. 12:15)

John Wilson is an auty solicitor, presently taking an extended break. He ran his own law firm very successfully for many years before eventually the recession combined with others' lack of understanding of autism dragged him down. But he says he had a great career and prefers not to dwell on that last bit! He is going forwards not backwards. Now he wants to get more involved in autism issues where he feels his experience could be very useful. He has attended Autscape before and has spoken at Autism Con. This is his first presentation at Autscape.

Caroline Hearst

Presenting: ***Claiming an identity they taught us to despise*** (Wed. 16:00)

Caroline discovered she is autistic seven years ago and using previous experience qualifying as an art psychotherapist and working as a consumer advisor in mental health she developed autism awareness training for counsellors and therapists. She offers autism awareness training and consultation and facilitates a post-identification programme for autistic adults. She also founded AutAngel an autistic run community interest company. She initiated home groups at Autscape and co-ordinated these for the last three years. She serves on her local autism strategy board and the new "forum" set up by the NAS to replace its council of members.

Kay Locke

Presenting: ***Can a mindfulness practice help relieve everyday stress in a neuro diverse population?*** (Thur. 09:30)

Kay Locke teaches mindfulness and movement to patients on the mental health wards for Manchester NHS, she also teaches yoga, massage and stress reduction to carers, adults and children affected by disability for; charities such as Space4autism in Macclesfield and Stockport Local Authority.

Kay was inspired to work in this field by her daughters who are both on the spectrum. While studying for a postgraduate certificate in Aspergers Syndrome at Sheffield Hallam University Kay was diagnosed with ASC nine years ago.

Kay is currently studying on the Masters in Mindfulness based studies programme at Bangor University.

Martijn Dekker

Presenting: ***Autistic identity and the limits of inclusion*** (Thur. 11:30)

Martijn is a 42 year old autistic father of three who divides his life between the Netherlands and the UK. He served on the board of Autescape in various capacities, including chair, programme coordinator and technical manager, between 2006 and 2015. Between 1996 and 2012-ish he ran an international support network for autistic people called InLv which turned out influential enough to be referenced in "Neurotribes" by Stephen Silberman. In 1998 he wrote a short paper titled "On our own terms: emerging autistic culture" which is still occasionally cited even now, naive as though it may have been.

Kabie Brook

Presenting: ***Expectations of what 'Autistic' means and how this impacts upon self identity*** (Thur. 12:15)

Kabie has 25 years experience working with and for Autistic people of all ages.

Cofounder and current chairperson of ARGH, a collective advocacy, lobbying and campaigning group run by and for Autistic adults, Kabie is part of the Scottish Government Autism Strategy Governance Group as well as being involved with national and local organisations including Inverness Access Panel and as a local community advisor for Police Scotland.

Kabie also has experience of organising and speaking at events, including training workshops for parents and practitioners and is particularly interested in pandisability engagement, intersectionality and 'Autistic' as political identity.

Olivia Astrid Pountney

Presenting: ***Exploring Autistic identity through performance*** (Thur. 14:00)

Olivia has had 10 years experience working within the theatre and amateur/semi-professional dramatics. She has worked with many different originations and people from all ages and abilities. Olivia is also autistic and a very keen proponent of the autism rights movement and the greater neurodiversity moment.

Hannah Ebben

Presenting: ***Identifying with autism in film and television*** (Thur. 16:00)

Hannah Ebben (pronunciation: 'Ebon') is an Autistic PhD student at the Autism Centre at Sheffield Hallam University. She studies the way in which people have employed the word 'autism' in their everyday life throughout the years, and especially how this has occurred in film. Eventually, she hopes to be able to facilitate new definitions of human diversity and practices of signification for fellow Autistic people in and outside academia. Born in the Netherlands, she received her diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome in 2006 and completed a BA degree in Cultural Studies and a MRes degree in Art and Visual Culture.

Dr Larry Arnold

Presenting: ***Whose Identity?*** (Fri. 11:30)

Larry Arnold has a PhD in Education based upon researching the autistic community which he has inhabited since the late 1990s having formerly been an activist for disability rights before discovering his own autistic identity.

He has had a number of formal roles including being the first autistic board member of a British autism charity. He has a particular interest in the ethics of autism research.

He has been a frequent presenter on themes of autism and disability rights for over a decade and currently maintains a role as an activist for neurodiversity.